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SUBJECT: GOF HOSTS INFORMAL MEETING ON GLOBAL FOOD
PARTNERSHIP

REF: DWYER 6/20 (AND PREVIOUS) E-MAILS

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1. (SBU) Summary: On 7/23 France's Ministry of Agriculture hosted an informal meeting with international partners to further thinking on a global partnership for food and agriculture. The proposal fleshes out an initiative initially raised by President Sarkozy at the June 3 High-level Food Security Conference in Rome, and subsequently discussed at an informal 6/19 meeting in Paris (ref). The French see their three-pronged initiative as responding to -- and validated by -- the G8 Leaders' Statement call for a global food partnership, as well as for a global network of high-level experts on food and agriculture. Aspects of the current French proposal are still problematic, but there appears to be sufficient common ground for us to work with the GOF to shape the Global Partnership on Food and Agriculture (termed by the French as the International Group for Food Security). End summary.

2. (SBU) The 7/23 informal meeting was chaired by Ministry of Agriculture DAS-equivalent for International Affairs Philippe Vincon, and organized by the MFA Directorate General for Cooperation (the development ministry). USAID/Rome Richard Newberg, USAID/DCHA/PPM Susan Bradley, Ag Minister Counselor and Econ Counselor attended for the U.S. Bilateral participants (largely from Paris and/or Rome missions) included Australia, Belgium, the UK, Mexico, Sweden, Luxembourg, Canada, New Zealand, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Switzerland, Denmark, Ireland and Luxembourg. Representatives from the European Commission, WFP, FAO, IFAD and the African Development Bank also participated. The World Bank was not represented.

3. (SBU) The GOF characterized its initiative as an effort to make existing instruments more efficient, not to create new structures. The initiative would be based on three pillars: 1) a global partnership that would serve as a policy space for broad-based stakeholder (governmental and NGO) discussions on food security policy; 2) an international group of experts that would bring a multidisciplinary perspective to the table and inform the global partnership; 3) a modest new financing facility, to be housed at IFAD, that would help catalyze private sector and IFI reengagement in agricultural investment and lending. (Note: Post has e-mailed latest GOF working documents describing three pillars to EUR/WE, EEB and F. End note.)

14. (SBU) In its presentation of pillar one the GOF emphasized the need for a place to discuss the impact of broad-based public policy choices on food security, and to better coordinate policy responses. From trade to environmental issues a wide range of factors impact global food security, yet there was no vehicle for discussing general Qpolicy coherenceQ on such issues. The French would open a partnership (which would come together in annual high-level meetings) of UN agencies, Bretton Woods institutions, donors, beneficiaries, private sector and professional organizations, supported by a secretariat. The global partnership, or QInternational Group for Food Security,Q would elaborate a comprehensive global strategy on food security with recommendations on agricultural production, regulation, policies, public resource allocation, and the formulation of the research agenda for an international panel of experts. For the annual meetings an appointed panel of experts would produce a report on global food insecurity and the financing that was allocated to the effort. The global partnership, presumably through the Secretariat, would also develop and implement a communications strategy to push out policy recommendations. The GOF suggested the UNSYQs Task Force on Global Food Security Crisis might provide a secretariat for such a group, but had not yet raised the idea there.

15. (SBU) The presentation generated considerable discussion on the challenge, and desirability, of generating QglobalQ policy responses when key drivers

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of food security varied considerably from region to region. Most welcomed a multidisciplinary approach, saying it made little sense to discuss food security without taking into account poverty reduction goals, the impact of climate change, trade policy and other critical factors. Most, including the U.S., also agreed that country-led responses would be a critical part of the equation. The U.S. del cautioned against a large bureaucratic structure and mandate associated with the Global Partnership and Secretariat, and suggested as a model the International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IPAPI). The UK rep said HMG thinking on a global partnership was Qfairly advanced,Q that it favored a Qlight structureQ as suggested by the U.S., and that the French proposal Qcould be it.Q He emphasized the importance of bringing private sector actors into the equation. There was a general consensus that annual meetings would be insufficient.

16. (SBU) The French chair informally summarized the partnership discussion by saying that 1) views were advanced, but the input of this group would be taken into account in a final proposal; 2) the fact that 800 million people are suffering from hunger indicates there is a policy problem that needs to be addressed, and a need to help policymakers understand the impact of broad-based policy choices on food security; 3) nobody wants to create a new body, the idea is to better coordinate existing agencies.

International Panel on Food Security

17. (SBU) The French described an QInternational Panel on Food SecurityQ as a possible response to the G8 call for a Qglobal network of high-level experts. The GOF envisions a multidisciplinary group of experts

to provide Qscientific, objective and incontestable analysisQ to the Global Partnership (on an annual basis) to better anticipate and manage food crises. The IPCC and its analysis of climate change could serve as a model. A secretariat could be housed at the FAO. The group would have four functions: 1) assess the food security situation; 2) analyze the determinant factors of food insecurity; 3) analyze the feasibility of different policy tools and measures; 4) identify risks of food crises. The GOF emphasized the importance of casting the net beyond agronomists, to bring in economists, political scientists, sociologists and others who could speak to the impact of broader policy issues on food security.

18. (SBU) In follow-up discussion some participants questioned the value-added of such a group, whether and how the information would be used, and whether existing structures might be tweaked to perform the same functions. U.S. del recommended a lighter, more inclusive and possibly voluntary, agile Qglobal networkQ (again along the IPAPI model and as agreed to by the G-8), rather than a panel of experts appointed by a global partnership. The U.S. del also voiced concern over housing a secretariat for the panel of experts at FAO while that organization should be more focused now on institutional reform. FAO must produce an Immediate Action Plan to implement the recommendations of the Independent External Evaluation that is acceptable to the U.S. and other member states. U.S. del further opined that much of the proposed analysis is already out there and we should move to action with a sense of urgency.

19. (SBU) In referring to the IPCC analogy the French chair summarized by acknowledging that the science of climate change was QsimpleQ relative to the science of food security. The French recognized the need to clarify the relationship between the experts group (pillar 2) and the global partnership (panel 1). In the French view the QpartnershipQ would be the place for strategic discussion of political and economic policy, the experts group a means of involving the scientific community in informing that discussion. For example, what is the impact of climate change on agricultural production in five or ten years? The scientific community could give advice to policymakers in terms of consequences. On FAO, the French agreed on the criticality of reform going forward. But for QcoherenceQ an experts group on food and agriculture

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would have to have some sort of relationship with FAO.

Financial Reengagement
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110. (SBU) The third pillar (Qfinancial reengagementQ) responds to what the GOF sees as a need for Qmassive reengagementQ of the financial community to ensure food security. There were five targets: eliminate bottlenecks (ranging from land and water use to financial services); improve public policies; create jobs; improve safety nets; and compensate for macro shocks. These could be tackled through four main channels: strengthening existing specialized institutions; reengaging multilateral institutions (including new instruments and expertise); engaging new actors (better tapping global savings, including sovereign wealth funds); and by creating a new facility (a QGlobal Facility for Food SecurityQ) to be housed at IFAD.

111. (SBU) For the latter the GOF envisions a catalytic, flexible facility to finance Qniche projects and Qtake risksQ that larger institutions

might shun. The facility would have two windows, one to support capacity-building and enhance prevention and management of food crises, a second to support projects to boost productivity (with particular focus on smallholders). Added-value would come from the focus on innovative financing and smallholders. The facility would also help to access (and thus improve the efficiency of) larger investment funds to scale up projects. The French reported that private sector institutions such as Credit Agricole had expressed interest in becoming more active in the sector, provided they could be accompanied by a facility such as that which the GOF was proposing.

¶12. (SBU) In follow-up discussion the IFAD rep confirmed that his organization would be willing to host such a facility. In responding to the U.S. del question as to why these same objectives could not be pursued as part of the next replenishment cycle (2010-2012), in which IFAD is requesting a doubling of resources to scale up programs in response to rising food and fuel prices, the IFAD rep said that a facility as proposed by the French (a multi-donor trust fund) would not be limited by IFAD strictures and could be designed for maximum flexibility, including for possible financing of private sector initiatives, and attract additional funding. The U.S. del also raised concerns about a proposed parallel governance structure for the facility that would appear to substitute for the role of the Executive Board, especially if the proposed facility was to be substantial. The French presenter said the proposed fund would not be that large, but if it grew to \$1 billion that would be QgreatQ.

¶13. (SBU) In his informal conclusion the French chair noted general agreement on the need for more, and more innovative, investment (including private sector investment) in agriculture. The size of, and rules for access to, a facility are open questions, as are questions related to governance. While the GOF was suggesting a fairly modest-sounding facility, it was Qtoo earlyQ to discuss numbers. The African Water Facility, housed within the African Development Bank, might serve as a reference in terms of scale.

Next Steps

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¶14. (SBU) Looking ahead the French said they plan to meet with the UN Task Force in August, and consult further with EU partners. They hope to distribute draft working papers (in English) incorporating the 7/23 discussion by late August. In early fall the GOF would look to meet with developingcountry partners. France was considering putting something on the table for broader consideration at UNGA in late September (Note: Consistent with the G8 Leaders Statement call to Qwork with other interested parties for the next UN General Assembly to realize the global partnership.Q End note.) The World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings in October might also be a suitable venue for further discussion of the global partnership.

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¶15. (SBU) Comment: The GOF sees itself in the lead, even beyond its EU presidency, for creating a global partnership for food and agriculture, and plans to present a proposal for the UNGA in September. From our vantage thereQs sufficient common ground to engage with the French and shape the partnership, which, in its broad outlines, the GOF sees as having been validated by (and responding to) the G8 Leadership Statement. The GOF will be under the gun from President Sarkozy to push this effort forward. In its

view the train has left the station and we will need to work constructively with the French well in advance of UNGA to avoid unpleasant surprises. An offer to co-host with the French (possibly in conjunction with appropriate G8 partners such as Italy, the U.K., or Japan) an event related to the partnership proposal on the margins of UNGA (or the WB/IMF Annual Meetings) could be a way of ensuring that we're on the same page.

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